

To: Joanne Kozberg, Co-Chair
Bill Hauck, Co-Chair
CPR Commision
1400 10th St
Sacramento, Ca 95814

C/o Cathy Poncabre

**Comments on Recommendation “ETV25 Balance Career Technical Education
and College Preparation in High Schools”
in the *California Performance Review***

On behalf of the California Language Teachers; Association, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to address the recommendations regarding career technical education and college preparation in California’s high schools. CLTA is the one association that represents the world languages and cultures teaching professionals in the state. Over the past twenty-five or more years, our state has achieved great success in extending access and equity to the core curriculum to all students, especially under-represented minorities. This has enabled students who might never have contemplated post-secondary education to earn degrees that guarantee them greater economic success and satisfaction in their lives.

We understand the need for an educational sequence that will attract and retain students who may not want to obtain a bachelor’s degree. The data and arguments presented in the *California Performance Review* are persuasive. However, because of the impact that this legislation would have on poor, immigrant and minority students, we question the appropriateness of not even retaining the current Education Code’s minimal, optional requirement of one year of foreign language study for high school graduation. In addition to this, we do not believe that our state should, in good conscience, close the door to world language study to vocational students; this may very well be also to close the door to technical positions and vocations that might require competency in a language other than English.

The authors of the 2002 California *Master Plan for Education* included several recommendations reflecting a renewed interest in career technical education (CTE). They appear in the section titled “Access to Rigorous Curriculum What Will Prepare All Students For Success.” Recommendation 11.3, in that same section, is this: “The State should ensure that **all schools provide all students** [emphases added] with curriculum and coursework that include the knowledge, skills, and experiences that enable them to attain mastery of oral and written expression in English and that establish a foundation for future mastery of a second language by the end of elementary school, and attain oral proficiency and full literacy in both English and at least one other language by the end of secondary school.” The drafters of the *Master Plan* make it clear that proficiency both in English and in a second language should not be limited to just one category of students.

The importance of languages other than English in American education has changed dramatically from what it was even fifteen years ago. Foreign language teachers no longer spend most class time explaining grammar in English or translating passages into English. Today's language teacher attempts to use only the second language in all class activities and expects students to do the same. Today's language instruction is aimed at developing students' communication skills, not at their ability to talk *about* the language, but rather at their ability to *use* the language in lifelike situations.

This shift to emphasis on communicative competence is important for all students, but it is particularly crucial for most students engaged in Career / Technical Education. It is important in the health services in multilingual, multicultural California. It is important in all levels of business and information technology in an economy that becomes more global every day. As recently as 2002, Bill Hauck, president of the California Business Roundtable and Co-Chair of this Commission, labeled the dual-language proposal of the *Master Plan* "desirable and doable . . . From a business standpoint, it will be increasingly important for young people to speak a second language" (quoted by Jim Sanders, "School plan seeks 2nd language for all," *Sacramento Bee*, 12/1/2002).

Regardless of the teaching strategies used, research has demonstrated that students of foreign languages perform more effectively and proficiently in English than their monolingual counterparts. While there are still other reasons for acquiring second-language ability cited by the National Foreign Language Assistance Act (1994, Section 7512, *Findings*), we mention only that four out of five new jobs created in the U. S. come from foreign trade. Successful foreign trade depends on a workforce with a range of language competencies in employees at every level.

Until all too recently, many of our fellow citizens regarded foreign languages as a frill in schools, subject to the ups-and-downs of the fiscal picture of the year. Programs would be reduced or eliminated because they were not one of the core subjects. That has changed. In the recently-enacted reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994, known as *No Child Left Behind*, foreign languages is a "core academic subject," along with English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography (Title IX, Part A, Section 9101[11]).

There is one final reason to keep a foreign language high school graduation requirement – even if it remains as an alternative to visual/performing arts. In June, there was the first-ever National Language Conference, held at the University of Maryland. Sponsored by the Department of Defense, co-hosted by the National Security Agency and the Center for the Advanced Study of Language at the university, it brought together some 400 experienced professionals from government, business, and education. We took the first steps in what we hope to be the creation of a National Language Council and the eventual development of a national language policy. Among our conclusions at the Conference:

- The U. S. needs both more language breadth and more language depth.

- There is little public awareness of the need for foreign language skills and career paths in business and in government.
- All sectors must address competing priorities to raise the level of language capability.

World language and culture studies prepare students for the 21st century. Second language competence leads to a competitive advantage in the world of work, especially in California where nearly 40% of the inhabitants speak a language other than English at home. We therefore urge that foreign languages remain in the curriculum for CTE students. We live in a changed world that demands the ability of every educated person, regardless of career path, to communicate with and understand people from different cultures. It is sound public policy to provide instruction to help realize that goal.

Prepared by:

Julian F. Randolph

Professor of Spanish, Emeritus

San Francisco State University

Chair, California Foreign Language Project Advisory Board

Co-chair, California Language Teachers Association Political Advocacy Committee

Lorraine D'Ambruoso

Executive Director

California Language Teachers' Association